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Port Producer Fladgate Expands Into Portuguese Table Wine



The Fladgate Partnership (TFP), owners of Taylor Fladgate and other leading Port houses, has been the sole major Port company to produce only fortified wine. That's changing now. The company has purchased the estates of Ideal Drinks, a company founded in 2010 by Carlos Dias. The deal includes inventory, brands, wineries and nearly 500 acres of vineyards outside the Douro. Neither party disclosed the price.

Dias is a successful Portuguese businessman who built his wealth in Italian fashion ventures and luxury watches, including the Swiss brand Roger Dubois. He sold that company 14 years ago and established Ideal Drinks in his native Portugal. Dias invested substantial time and money to purchase exceptional estates in multiple appellations, namely Vinho Verde, Dão and Bairrada. Total annual production is more than 65,000 cases.

Established in 1692 with Taylor Fladgate, TFP also includes Croft, Krohn and Fonseca Guimaraens. According to CEO Adrian Bridge, despite

repeated demand in recent years for TFP to branch out into table wines, the firm, focusing primarily on special category Port wines, would not be able to spare grapes for Douro DOC wines.

When Ideal Drinks came up for sale, he added, the opportunity was not to be missed. TFP's newly created table wines division will be centered around the Ideal Drinks estates. All 34 staff members will be incorporated into TFP, including the winemaking teams, led by consultant Pascal Chatonnet.

The estates are extensive. In Minho, Quinta da Pedra has 131 acres and Paço de Palmeira has 59 acres. In Dão, Quinta de Bella has 124 acres. In Bairrada, Quinta de Curia has 35 acres and Colinas de S. Lourenço has 138 acres. Other smaller properties are included in the package.

Bridge emphasized that TFP exports 93% of all its production, whereas Ideal Drinks sells 96% in Portugal. So, he concluded, there is an opportunity to take these wines to the international markets. "At this moment, we are evaluating everything, and we haven't made any final decisions," said Bridge.

—Luis Antunes

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IN MEMORIAM

Loire Valley Legend Jean Baumard

A master of Chenin Blanc in the Loire Valley, Jean Baumard of Domaine des Baumard died Aug. 8 at age 92. The Baumard family has been cultivating vines in Anjou since 1634, but Jean was responsible for the quality surge of the domaine's modern era and for restoring prominence to the dry wines of Savennières and sweet wines of Quarts de Chaume.



Baumard trained as a winemaker in Dijon and Bordeaux before joining his father in 1953 at the family winery. He took over in 1955 and set out to expand their holdings, acquiring 14 acres in the Quarts de Chaume and later purchasing 36 acres in the prestigious Savennières appellation.

"Jean was a tireless innovator, perhaps even a bit of a revolutionary, particularly when it came to viticulture," said Frederick Ek, founder of Classic Wine Imports, a U.S. importer for Domaine des Baumard.

By championing a mineral-driven, vibrant style for Chenin Blanc, rather than the traditional botrytis-affected style, Baumard was widely credited with producing some of the region's finest, most complex wines. He was also among the first to promote sustainable vineyard practices in the 1950s. His son, Florent, gradually took over winemaking starting in the early 1990s and helms the estate today. "I am only trying to continue what my father did, not revolutionize it," Florent said in 2004.

—Kristen Bieler

Court Upholds Garden State Ban Against Wine Shipments

New Jersey's law barring wine shipments from retailers in other states is not going away any time soon. On Aug. 22, federal district court judge Julien Xavier Neals upheld the ban, dismissing the case Jean-Paul Weg LLC (doing business as the Wine Cellarage) and Lars Neubohn v. James Graziano and Matthew J. Platkin. (Graziano is director of the New Jersey Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control; Platkin is New Jersey's attorney general.)

Under current law, New Jersey is one of the many states that permit direct-to-consumer wine shipments from out-of-state wineries, with restrictions, but it prohibits wine shipments from out-of-state retailers. New York City-based fine wine retailer the Wine Cellarage filed a complaint in 2019 against New Jersey's out-of-state retailer ban. The plaintiffs argued that New Jersey's retailer ban violates the U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause by barring out-of-state retailers while allowing in-state retailers to ship to consumers.

Judge Neals agreed with the state, dismissing the plaintiffs' Commerce Clause claim "with prejudice." In his summary judgment, Neals states that the law is, "justified by the legitimate, non-protectionist ground of promoting public health and safety."

—Collin Dreizen

A CONSTITUTIONAL DILEMMA

State bans on direct shipping from out-of-state merchants come down to a debate the Supreme Court has yet to definitively settle:

- ▶ The U.S. Constitution's Commerce Clause forbids states from discriminating against products and companies in other states.
- ▶ But the 21st Amendment, which repealed federal Prohibition, allows each state to regulate alcohol sales within its borders.
- ▶ The Supreme Court has held that states can discriminate against alcohol sales from out-of-state to promote temperance and an orderly alcohol market. States cannot discriminate simply to protect local businesses.